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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to test a "peak communication experience" (PCE) scale developed from Abraham Maslow's theory of PCE's, a model of one's highest interpersonal communication moments in terms of perceived mutual understanding, happiness, and personal fulfillment. Nineteen items, extrapolated from Maslow's model but rendered more generally communicative than the original wording, constituted the PCE scale used in the study. Subjects, 37 females and 37 males enrolled in a required speech communication course responded to each of the 19 items using a five-point scale from "very true" to "very untrue." Statistical analysis of the results identified six peak communication components: (1) loving acceptance, (2) openminded insight, (3) spontaneity, (4) pleasant fear, (5) absorption, and (6) self-detachment. Males and females did differ in their PCE reporting, with females rating significantly higher on both loving acceptance and spontaneity and rating the PCE as involving more pleasant fear than males did. These differences seem to be sex-role appropriate. Many PCE questions still await the researcher interested in developing a high-ceiling interpersonal communication theory, but clearly the exploration of PCE's will yield new insights in human communication practices and possibilities. (The questionnaire and tables of results are appended.) (JL)

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PEAK COMMUNICATION EXPERIENCES: CONCEPT, STRUCTURE, AND SEX DIFFERENCES

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The concept of the "peak communication experience" is introduced, and a peak communication experience scale developed from Maslow's model of the generalized peak experience. Data obtained from 74 subjects were submitted to principal components analysis with varimax rotation, yielding six factors accounting for 66.1% of the total variance, as follows: Loving Acceptance, Openminded Insight, Spontaneity, Pleasant-Fear, Absorption and Self-detachment. Analyses of variance of peak communication experience ratings resulted in significant sex differences, with females rating themselves higher on Loving Acceptance ($p=.002$) and Spontaneity ($p=.028$) than males, a finding consistent with previous research on female-male communication style differences.

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Abraham Maslow, over twenty-five years ago, introduced to the behavioral sciences the concept of the "peak experience."[1] Maslow was interested in mapping those cognitive states and perceptual tendencies activated during one's most "self-actualizing" episodes. Toward this end, Maslow probed reports of intense experiences with nature, love, aesthetics, creativity, intellectual breakthrough, significant personal insight, spirituality, sexuality, and feats of outstanding athletic performance.

An examination of the peak experience in the arena of human communication, however, still has not been undertaken. Yet many of us know through observation and reflection that some of the most precious, positive and powerful moments in life, moments of heightened personal integration, insight and involvement, come through significant episodes of face-to-face communication with another human being.

The aim of the present effort is to introduce and consider the concept of "peak communication experiences" within an interpersonal communication context, to tentatively chart the underlying factorial structure of peak communication experiences, and to examine the role of gender in peak communication experiencing. Since peak communication experiences (PCEs) presumably constitute a measurable aspect of human communication behavior, any comprehensive interpersonal communication theory will need to include within its domain the investigation of PCEs, targeted toward an increased

ability to describe, explain, predict and influence PCE phenomena.

We will begin by reviewing Maslow's model of the generalized peak experience, from which the PCE concept has been derived.

MASLOW'S THEORY OF MOTIVATION AND THE GENERALIZED PEAK EXPERIENCE MODEL

Maslow's hierarchical theory of human motivation is one of the most frequently adopted theories of motivational dynamics within the communication discipline.[2] The theory suggests that the human organism's behavior is motivated by efforts to gratify a graduated series of unsatisfied needs.[3] After a given need is sufficiently gratified it ceases to be the most active determinant of immediate behavior, and another need more advanced on the motivational ladder becomes prepotent.[4] Specifically, physiological needs are the most basic that the organism seeks to satisfy, followed in turn by safety needs, belongingness and love needs, and esteem needs.

Once the basic needs have been gratified, they no longer motivate behavior to the extent they did prior to gratification. Rather, another form of discontent emerges, a certain restlessness to develop oneself, a growing desire to more completely explore and extend one's capacities and to live up to one's potential as a fully functioning human being.

This advanced motivational urge Maslow refers to as one's tendency toward self-actualization.[5]

Maslow identified several features that seem to be associated with those individuals who are somewhat consistently operating from the level of self-actualization.[6] One of these features is that self-actualizing persons appear to have a greater frequency and intensity of "peak experiences" than other people, "feelings of limitless horizons opening up to the vision, feelings of being simultaneously more powerful and also more helpless than one ever was before, feelings of great ecstasy and wonder and awe, the loss of placing in time and space with, finally, the conviction that something extremely important and valuable has happened, so that the subject is to some extent transformed and strengthened even in his daily life by such experiences."[7] These peak experiences can be viewed as positively-valued alternate states of awareness, usually triggered by some identifiable stimulus such as nature, solitude, shared love, deep thought, perceived "perfection" or "beauty," etc.[8]

Subsequent to his early observation that relatively self-actualizing persons often have peak experiences, Maslow came to conclude "that all or almost all people have or can have peak experiences,"[9] and that "peak experiences can be considered a transient self-actualization of the person."[10] Maslow was quite clear on this latter point: "In other words, any person in any of the peak experiences

takes on temporarily many of the characteristics which I found in self-actualizing individuals. That is, for the time they become self-actualizers."[11]

If it is the case that one's peak experiences tend to be among one's closest approximations to a self-actualizing perspective, then the utility of studying these states becomes apparent: the peak experience provides a convenient focus for gaining knowledge of heightened states of human functioning.[12]

Maslow more fully developed the emergent concept of the peak experience by asking nearly 300 respondents (mostly from a student population) to reflect upon "the most wonderful experiences of their lives," acute moments of great happiness, or perhaps even "ecstasy" or "rapture," e.g., being in love, or being strongly moved by music or literature or visual art, or having a sudden dramatic surge of creativity, etc. Respondents were asked, by means of interview or questionnaire, to describe such moments as fully as possible, especially with regard to attendant perceptions and feelings.

These data led Maslow to conclude that "average" individuals indeed have peak experiences, and that these alternate states of awareness can be discussed in terms of nineteen general characteristics: (1) the experience is seen apart from its possible usefulness or purpose; (2) the percept is attended to fully; (3) the nature of the object is

perceived apart from human concerns; (4) the perception is richer; (5) the perception is relatively egoless; (6) the peak experience carries its own intrinsic value; (7) there is a disorientation in time and space; (8) the experience is only good and desirable, and is never felt to be evil or undesirable; (9) the experience feels more absolute and less relative; (10) the peak experience is more passive and receptive than active; (11) the emotions of wonder, awe, reverence, humility and surrender are present, and sometimes a kind of "pleasant fear"; (12) the world is seen unitively; (13) there is an ability to be abstract and concrete at the same time; (14) many dichotomies are transcended or resolved; (15) the perceiver feels loving, compassionate, accepting; (16) perception is non-classificatory; (17) there is a loss of fear, anxiety, inhibition; (18) the person becomes more spontaneous; (19) there is a healthy regression, in the service of maturity.[13]

The generalized peak experience, then, is an alternate state of awareness displaying some combination of certain of the above characteristics. Maslow considers peak experiences to not only be among many individuals' "happiest" times, but to also be among their "healthiest" moments, to be a transient expression of the self-actualizing process.[14]

PEAK COMMUNICATION EXPERIENCES: THE CONCEPT, THE QUESTIONS, THE LITERATURE

The Concept. Consider a bell-shaped curve, plotting a given individual's range of interpersonal communication

transactions as to the degree of perceived mutual understanding, personal fulfillment, and happiness they have provided for that individual. We will refer to those interpersonal communication events that fall within approximately one standard deviation above and below the mean as that individual's "baseline communication experiences." These represent those daily occurrences that leave one neither particularly distraught nor elated, and that are marked by an average degree of perceived mutual understanding. For a normally distributed population of such data, of course, we would expect about two-thirds of one's interpersonal communication involvements to constitute this baseline range.

To that range of interpersonal communication events falling one or two or more standard deviations below the mean we will apply the term "negative communication experiences." These episodes are negatively-valued, seeming to run contrary to one's well-being, subtracting from personal happiness and fulfillment. Perceived mutual understanding is low. These are the attempts at communication that one might prefer had not happened, at least not as they did.

The remaining portion of our hypothetical curve, one or more standard deviations above the mean, we will refer to as representing the "positive communication experiences," those that have brought a relative measure of perceived mutual understanding, happiness, and personal fulfillment. It is within this area of our theoretical distribution, over in the upper-tail region, that we mark those transactions that

constitute one's "greatest moments" in interpersonal communication, and that will be referred to as the peak communication experiences (PCEs). These are one's highest interpersonal communication moments, in terms of perceived mutual understanding, happiness, and personal fulfillment.

It is of interpersonal communication events within the upper-tail region of our theoretical distribution that we know the least. Peak communication experiences, by definition, are not the place where one spends most of his or her communication time. The PCE is the exception to the norm, the statistically rare event. Yet it is a deeper understanding of precisely these infrequent interpersonal communication experiences that offers something of unique value to the perceptive theorist. Consider the dialogical perspective, for instance, which is relatively recent within contemporary communication studies, and remains underdeveloped.[15] It may be that the exploration of peak communication experiences is central to discerning the nature of dialogue, and developing such high quality forms of communication relationship.

It seems to the authors that there are vantage points offered by peak communication experiences, and their investigation, that are of special significance for a growing theory of interpersonal communication.

The Questions. There are two PCE research questions of principal interest in the present study:

(1) If subjects are asked to recall their "peak moments" in interpersonal communication-- the upper 5-10% of their interpersonal communication experiences in terms of degree of perceived mutual understanding, personal fulfillment, and derived happiness-- how would these subjects apply the Maslow descriptors to these peak communication experiences? More exactly, what structure would emerge that would give shape to the peak communication experience concept? The Maslow model has continued to serve in its original form as the prevailing paradigm of the generalized peak experience, yet it appears from a description of the nineteen identified characteristics that there is substantial descriptor overlap. It is surprising that there have been no efforts to search for a more parsimonious pattern through factor analysis, yet no such attempts have been located.

First, then, the present study seeks to establish a foundation for understanding the approximate structure of peak communication experiences within an interpersonal context.

(2) Secondly, are there differences between females and males in peak communication experiencing? Gender has not been treated as a variable in previous peak experience research, although Maslow implied that female-male differences are likely.[16] The growing body of literature on sex differences in communication certainly suggests that sex be examined as a variable in peak communication experiencing.[17] Especially relevant are the findings that females tend to be more self-disclosing[18] and emotionally expressive than males.[19] Females also tend to make greater

use of eye contact than males,[20] are more likely to smile,[21] are more touch-oriented with same-sex persons,[22] and stand closer to same-sex dyad partners than males.[23] Females tend to be less verbally aggressive,[24] more likly to listen,[25] and less likely to interrupt than males.[26] Females have been found to be somewhat more empathic,[27] more nurturance-oriented,[28] and more accurate at decoding and encoding emotional states.[29] Females are more likely to claim "love" for same-sex friends,[30] and display more positive feelings about social interaction than males.[31] In a managerial context, females have been perceived as more receptive to subordinates' ideas than males, more encouraging of effort, more attentive and concerned, and more likely to stress happy interpersonal relationships.[32]

While some studies have resulted in no significant differences between the sexes on the above socio-emotional variables, whenever differences have been obtained they rather consistently favor females. As Hoffman has noted, "Females have traditionally been socialized to acquire expressive traits such as empathy, compassion, and giving and receiving affection. Males are initially socialized expressively, but with age are increasingly encouraged to acquire instrumental traits, such as mastery and problem solving."[33]

In sum, it might be expected that females would be more likely than males to report certain heightened states of functioning in the relatively affective sphere of peak communication experiencing.

The Literature. In spite of Maslow's invitation to researchers to study the self-actualizing process via peak experiences, formal empirical investigation into peak experiences since Maslow's initial probings has been scant.

One of the more relevant inquires is that of Ravizza, in the area of athletics.[34] Interviews were conducted with sixteen male and four female athletes, representing a dozen individual and team sports; twelve of the interviewees were university level athletes, three Olympic level, and five intramural or recreational level. Each athlete was asked to discuss his or her "greatest moment" while participating in sport. Occasional open-ended questions were asked to stimulate the interviewee, such as "how did the world appear to you?" and "how did you feel different than usual?" Each interview was tape-recorded and content analyzed as to which of Maslow's characteristics were present. It was found that all nineteen of Maslow's descriptors were included within the subjects' array of responses. Two-thirds of Maslow's descriptors were used by over 50% of the interviewees, and over half of the nineteen descriptors were used by 80% or more of the respondents. As for the implication of his research, Ravizza concludes that "The inclusion of athletes' subjective experiences along with more traditional sports research will allow for a more complete investigation of the total sport experience than has been previously possible."[35]

Panzarella, interested in peak experiences triggered by exposure to the arts, asked approximately one hundred individuals, contacted primarily at art galleries and musical concerts, to

describe an "intense joyous experience" of listening to music or looking at visual art.[36] Written responses were content analyzed by three independent judges, using categories derived from Laski (not from Maslow).[37] A principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation was applied to the content analysis data, with four independent factors emerging: renewal ecstasy, motor-sensory ecstasy, withdrawal ecstasy, and fusion-emotional ecstasy. Long-lasting effects were attributed to their peak experiences by 90% of the respondents.

In addition to these studies of peak experiences during athletic and artistic involvement, there have been a small number of investigations in which religious experiences among members of the general population have been assessed. These studies are more tenuously related to present concerns, however, since the questions posed in these surveys revolve around specialized sensations that are not necessary conditions for the existence of peak experiences.[38]

As for research from within the communication discipline, the most pertinent appears to be the work of Hecht, who has developed the only existing instrument for measuring interpersonal communication satisfaction.[39] Using self-reports, interviews, and literature review, Hecht constructed a pool of possible communication satisfaction inventory items; then, using item analysis and factor analysis, a seemingly unidimensional nineteen-item Likert-style inventory was created.

While the interpersonal communication satisfaction inventory would seem to be a potentially valuable tool for gathering data

regarding our typical interpersonal communication encounters we cannot, however, assume that the description and measurement of individuals' peak communication experiences are included within its parameters (nor was this the purpose for which the measure was devised). It would seem quite possible for subjects to rate a communication event as satisfying, using the com-sat inventory, without considering that event as constituting a PCE, if we base our definition of a peak communication experience on an extrapolation from the characteristics identified by Maslow. Subjects, for example, might indeed indicate that a given communication transaction "accomplished something," or that they "would like to have another conversation like this one," or that "each person got to say what they wanted," or that "the converstaion flowed smoothly," without construing the involvement as a peak communication experience.[40] The com-sat inventory would appear to tap the domain of one's baseline communication experiences, but to not necessarily exhaust reactions to communication events falling within the upper-tail of one's distribution.

It is this upper region, the perceptual realm of peak communication experiencing, that is the object of inquiry here, especially with regard to underlying structure and female-male differences.

METHOD

PCE Scale

Although Maslow's treatment of the nineteen peak experience characteristics covers twenty-two printed pages, within each

of the discussions of each of the characteristics Maslow includes an italicized sentence that summarizes that particular characteristic.[41] It seemed that with some re-wording each of Maslow's italicized summary statements could be converted into an understandable first-person statement having meaning within an interpersonal communication context. For example, Maslow's summary statement that in the generalized peak experience "When there is B-cognition, the percept is exclusively and fully attended to" was translated to read "I was completely absorbed in the other person I was communicating with, and in what we were talking about-- my total attention was present." Another example of such a translation is Maslow's statement that "The peak experience is felt as a self-validating, self-justifying moment which carries its own intrinsic value with it," which became "Our communication was valuable in and of itself, regardless of what it would lead to-- it was enough, just the way it was, as an end in itself." These translations directly drew upon language used by Maslow in his discussion of the specific characteristic being described.

The intention was to retain Maslow's essential meaning while casting the generalized descriptor into a non-technical first-person utterance anchored within an interpersonal communication context.

The nineteen communication-specific translations of the Maslow generalized peak experience model were then submitted to two judges (one faculty, one student) with academic background in interpersonal communication. These judges were independently asked to compare

the nineteen translaticns with the nineteen original wordings, and to rate each translation on a ten-point scale as to its fidelity to Maslow's overall meaning, as determined contextually from Maslow's writing. In all cases the translations were considered to be more generally communicative to the target audience than the original wording, and none scored below a nine on a ten-point scale of fidelity to Maslow's essential meaning.

These nineteen items, extrapolated from Maslow's model, together with a brief introduction, constituted the PCE scale used here.

Procedure

The subjects of the study were thirty-seven females and the same number of males (total N=74) enrolled in four sections of a required course in principles of speech communication at a major southwestern university. Over 90% of the subjects were Caucasian, the majority majoring in either business or engineering.

During the first week of classes, prior to lectures or reading assignments, subjects were given the PCE scale and asked to read the following introduction (underlines included):

> Will you think of the greatest moments in communication that you have ever had in your entire life? The peak moments in communication--the times when you felt that you and another person most got on one another's wavelength, when you most fully got through to the other, and the other got through to you. These times were probably within the upper 5-10% of all your communication experiences in your life--the most

positive communication encounters you've ever had, of the highest happiness and fulfillment.

Will you check each of the following items that in fact applies to these rare peak communication experiences. Maybe none of these items will apply, maybe some will, maybe all will--please be as accurate as you can in your responses.

The respondents then read each of the nineteen PCE items, and used a five-point scale to indicate whether for them a given item was very true or very untrue, or moderately true or untrue, or both true and untrue. This procedure took an average of ten minutes.

Statistical Analysis

To ascertain underlying dimensions of peak communication experiencing, the data gathered via the nineteen item PCE scale were submitted to principal components analysis with varimax rotation. Multivariate and univariate analyses of variance were used to assess the possibility of gender differences in peak communication experiencing.

Results

From the principal components analysis six factors were extracted with eigenvalues greater than unity. On the basis of a ±.30/±.60 purity criterion, fourteen of the nineteen PCE items were retained, with at least two items per factor (with one

exception), as follows: Loving Acceptance, four items, 25.9% of the total variance; Openminded Insight, three items, 10.2%; Spontaneity, two items, 9.2%; Pleasant Fear, one item, 8%; Absorption, two items, 7%; and Self-detachment, two items, 5.8%. These six factors account for 66.1% of the total variance. Table 1 displays the items comprising these factors.

[Table 1 goes about here]

The rotated factor structure and loadings are presented in Table 2.

[Table 2 goes about here]

Alpha coefficients were computed for the retained items within each multiple-item factor. Generally, the items within a particular factor measured that dimension at acceptable levels of internal consistency, considering the small number of items per factor and the short scale range. The coefficients are as follows: Loving Acceptance, .79; Openminded Insight, .66; Spontaneity, .56; Absorption, .58; Self-Detachment, .62.

For the second stage of data analysis, the extracted factors from the principal components solution were taken as measures of six dependent variables and submitted to multivariate and univariate analyses of variance to determine the effects of respondents' gender on the reporting of peak communication experiences. The multivariate analysis of variance, using Hotelling's T^2 statistic, proved significant (Wilk's Lambda = .81, $F(6, 67) = 2.64$,

p=.02), suggesting that females and males do differ in their PCE reporting. Inspection of the univariate analyses pinpoints the locus of these differences, with females rating significantly higher on both Loving Acceptance (F, (1, 72) = 11.31, p=.002) and Spontaneity (F, (1, 72) = 5.05, p=.028) than males. Additionally, females tended to rate the PCE as involving more Pleasant Fear than males, though this difference failed to reach the .05 level (F (1, 72) = 3.09, p=.083). No other differences approached significance. These data are summarized in Table 3.

[Table 3 goes about here]

DISCUSSION

The identification of six factors underlying peak communication experiences as conceptualized in the present study (accounting for 66.1% of the total variance) provides an efficient model for comprehending and discussing such communication events. The factors are rather clearly interpretable, and provide a contextually-based parsimonious rendering of Maslow's more generalized model.

In overview, the six principal peak communication experience components have been identified as follows:

(1) Loving Acceptance: seeing the beauty and richness of the other, and of the communication process itself/loving and accepting

the other/seeing the specialness of the other. (2) Open-minded Insight: perceiving with fewer categories, labels and judgments/relative resolution of opposites/insight into "a truer level of truth," eyes opened in a fresh way. (3) Spontaneity: spontaneous effortlessness, more whole in one's communication, being "more myself"/healthy childlikeness, more freely playful, expressive, creative. (4) Pleasant Fear: almost "too wonderful," almost "more than I could bear." (5) Absorption: completely absorbed, total attention present/the communication becoming "somehow all there was in the universe." (6) Self-detachment: forgetting of self, almost as if one's sense of "self" had sort of disappeared/ open and receptive listening, without needing to grab or strain in order to understand.

During peak communication experiences, then, it appears that there are modifications in the sense-of-identity and emotional subsystems, an alteration in the allocation of attention-energy, and a relative unloading of linguistic structures.[42] Ordinary functioning is presumably de-stabilized during PCEs, and several dynamic processes seem to be activated that are tentatively summarized by the obtained configuration of PCE factors.

It is interesting to note the similarity between the first three PCE factors -- Loving Acceptance, Openminded Insight, and Spontaneity, accounting for just over 45% of the total variance -- and the three communication variables considered by Rogers to be at the heart of effective helping

relationships,[43] and by Johannesen to be central to dialogue: Warmth, Empathy, and Genuineness.[44]

Why do differences exist between the sexes in the Loving Acceptance dimension of peak communication experiencing? Reviewers of the research literature on the psychology of sex differences[45] regularly come to the conclusion that it is congruent with male role prescriptions and expectations for males to specialize in what Bakan has called the mode of "agency," which deals with self-protection, competition, adversary relationships, and lack of emotion.[46] Females, however, have become more specialized in the mode of "communion," entailing the ability to be feelingful and intimate with others. In other words, females' achievement efforts are channelized differently than males'.[47] It is therefore sex-role-appropriate for males to be more restricted in their allocation of Loving Acceptance than females.[48] For males, even usage of the word "love" is more likely to be confined to romantic relationships with members of the opposite sex than is the case for females.[49] And perceptions of the "beauty" of the other, or the "specialness" of the other, and the "richness" of communication with the other (all aspects of the PCE Loving Acceptance dimension) may also be perceptions and descriptions that are reserved for more narrowly-defined intimacy relationships. Males tend to see their relationships with others as less "personalized" than do females.[50] Stoicism and lack of sentimentality are part of the sex-role

identity of males; women, however, are trained to value their feelings, and close, tender, expressive interpersonal relations.[51] The differences between the sexes on PCE Loving Acceptance are consistent with the pattern of female-male affective style differences predominant in the research literature.

Why the obtained sex differences on the PCE Spontaneity factor? One interpretation is, again, that males tend to have an instrumental attitude toward their interpersonal environment, and view the generalized other as someone to be controlled or manipulated to a greater extent than do females, who are more prone to construe their interpersonal worlds as needing placation and cultivation through nurturance and cooperation.[52] Assuming this to be the case, it is not unreasonable that males would be more "on guard" during even their most elevating communication encounters. Even when the male is not in an explicit attack/defense stance, it may be that he is reluctant to abandon the watchfulness that is part of his habitual social posture. "Childlikeness," "playfulness," "effortlessness," and being "more whole" in one's communication, these are behaviors not usually perceived as being consistent with the strategic manipulation of one's interpersonal environment.

Although the difference between the sexes on the PCE Pleasant-Fear factor did not reach significance at the .05 level ($p=.08$), if such a difference does in fact exist it would not be difficult to explain in light of the above line

of reasoning and findings. Males are less likely to publicly admit to being afraid than are females, since voluntarily announced fear is inconsistent with the traditional masculine stereotype.[53] Further, the fact that females would seem more invested in their PCEs (more Lovingly Accepting of the other and more Spontaneously involved) implies that females also have more to "lose" with the passing away of PCEs, and therefore their PCEs might evoke more of a bittersweet complexity of response.

Many PCE questions await the researcher interested in contributing to the development of a high-ceiling interpersonal communication theory. For instance, what are the roles of cognitive complexity,[54] communicator style,[55] and rhetorical sensitivity[56] in peak communication experiencing? How do specific verbal and nonverbal variables affect the likelihood of PCEs? What about contextual, motivational, topic and demographic variables? And what is the instrumental worth of PCEs to the communicator, and to the social environment? Attention to conceptual elucidation and elaboration is in order, as is scale development and hypothesis testing.[57]

Why study peak communication experiences? There are several reasons for undertaking the exploration of PCEs, including these: (1) PCEs may be one of the more powerful independent variables in the lives of many (or even most) people, and as such become a source of interest to those concerned with processes of attitude, value, and behavior change; (2) If one of our major thrusts as a discipline is to understand

and influence human symbol usage, then the study of PCEs becomes especially pertinent in that a modification of an individual's relationship to symbols seems to be one of the central elements of peak communication experiencing; (3) The study of PCEs becomes an opportunity for discovering fresh vantage points from which to view communication practices and possibilities.

TABLE 1

PEAK COMMUNICATION EXPERIENCE FACTORS
(N=74)

FACTOR I: LOVING ACCEPTANCE (25.9% of total variance)

Item #

3. I saw the beauty of the person I was communicating with, and the beauty of our communication itself, just as it was.
4. I saw the other person, and our communication together, in a richer way, a newer way, a more exciting way.
15. I felt very accepting and loving of the other person during our communication.
16. It's as though I compared this person with no other person--as we talked this person became more and more special, and not interchangeable with anyone else.

FACTOR II: OPENMINDED INSIGHT (10.2% of total variance)

9. During our communication I gained insight into a truer level of truth than I usually see; my eyes were opened in a fresh way.
13. I saw and heard without my own categories and labels and judgments getting in the way like they usually do.
14. Things that normally would seem like opposites, or somehow contradictory, became resolved while we were communicating, or at least didn't seem as opposite as they usually would.

FACTOR III: SPONTANEITY (9.2% of total variance)

18. I became more spontaneous, effortless, more myself, more whole in my communication.

19. I began to feel more childlike, in a healthy kind of way, in my communication--more freely playful, expressive, creative.

FACTOR IV: PLEASANT FEAR (8.0% of total variance)

11. The experience of becoming so close to this other person through our communication almost had a touch of "pleasant fear," a feeling of it all being more than I could bear, a feeling that it was almost "too wonderful."

FACTOR V: ABSORPTION (7.0% of total variance)

1. Our communication felt incredibly significant, as if it were somehow all there was in the universe.
2. I was completely absorbed in the other person I was communicating with, and in what we were talking about--my total attention was present.

FACTOR VI: SELF-DETACHMENT (5.8% of total variance)

5. I forgot about myself during our communication; at times it was as if my own sense of "self" had sort of disappeared.
10. My listening seemed so open, so receptive, and the words just flowed in upon me without me grabbing or straining to understand.

TABLE 2

FACTOR LOADINGS FOR VARIMAX ROTATED SOLUTION OF 19-ITEM PCE SCALE (N=74)

		FACTOR					
FACTOR LABELS	Item	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
I. Loving Acceptance	3	.81	.05	.08	.05	.11	.21
	4	.76	.13	.13	.10	.08	.07
	15	.77	.05	.20	.15	.01	.05
	16	.62	.22	.17	.04	.06	.09
II. Openminded Insight	9	.13	.83	.02	.05	.10	.03
	13	-.09	.66	.12	.11	.18	.25
	14	.26	.65	.27	-.02	-.18	.20
III. Spontaneity	18	.22	.17	.66	-.16	-.11	.12
	19	.15	.09	.71	.07	.14	-.09
IV. Pleasant Fear	11	.30	.05	-.10	.81	.07	.02
V. Absorption	1	.07	.20	.04	.09	.81	.05
	2	.13	-.23	-.03	-.26	.78	.20
VI. Self-detachment	5	-.07	.19	-.00	.44	.24	.64
	10	.25	.06	.03	.02	.09	.84
Miscellaneous items:	17	.32	.20	.49	-.13	-.12	.47
	6	-.18	.13	.52	.49	-.04	.20
	7	.07	-.15	.58	.28	.52	-.08
	8	.36	.57	.03	.37	.18	.06
	12	.45	.25	.23	.55	.02	.19
EIGENVALUE		4.92	1.95	1.75	1.51	1.34	1.10
% of Total Variance		25.9	10.2	9.2	8.0	7.0	5.8

TABLE 3

MALE AND FEMALE PCE FACTOR MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, AND F VALUES

	Males (n=37)		Females (N=37)			
FACTOR	$\bar{X}$*	Std.	$\bar{X}$*	Std.	F	p
I. Loving Acceptance	4.05	.66	4.51	.53	11.31	.002
II. Openminded Insight	3.33	.86	3.61	.76	2.20	.142
III. Spontaneity	3.76	.85	4.16	.70	5.05	.028
IV. Pleasant Fear	2.92	1.09	3.43	1.41	3.09	.083
V. Absorption	4.32	.63	4.22	.80	.42	.518
VI. Self-detachment	3.59	1.02	3.70	.86	.24	.625

*Mean values based on five-point scales.

1. Abraham H. Maslow, "Cognition of Being in the Peak Experiences," in Toward a Psychology of Being (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1968), chapter 6. Based on an address delivered before the American Psychological Association in 1956, and originally published in the Journal of Genetic Psychology, 94 (1959), 43-66.
2. A bookshelf survey of interpersonal communication texts in particular indicates that approximately 75% include at least a brief presentation of Maslow's theory of motivation.
3. Abraham H. Maslow, Motivation and Personality (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954), chapters 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8.
4. Maslow notes that a given need does not require complete gratification before a higher need begins to motivate behavior. See Maslow, Motivation and Personality, pp. 100-101.
5. On self-actualization: "We may define it as an episode or a spurt in which the powers of the person come together in a particularly efficient and intensely enjoyable way, and in turn in which he is more integrated and less split, more open for experience, more idiosyncratic, more perfectly expressive or spontaneous, more fully functioning, more creative, more humorous, more ego-transcending, more independent of his lower needs . . ." Maslow, Toward a Psychology of Being, p. 97.
6. Maslow, Motivation and Personality, chapter 12.
7. Ibid, p. 216-217.
8. The commonality would seem to be that awareness is quite focused on the object of perception, and attention is more

"receptive" than "active." For a discussion of these conditions, see Arthur Deikman, "Biomodal Consciousness and the Mystic Experience," in Philip R. Lee, Robert E. Ornstein, David Galin, Arthur Deikman and Charles T. Tart, Symposium On Consciousness: Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Annual Meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, February 1974 (New York: The Viking Press, 1976), chapter 5.

9. Abraham H. Maslow, Religions, Values, and Peak Experiences (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1964), p. 27.

10. Ibid., p. 80.

11. Maslow, Toward a Psychology of Being, p. 97.

12. "This makes self-actualization a matter of degree and of frequency rather than an all-or-none affair, and thereby makes it more amenable to available research procedures. We need no longer be limited to searching for those rare subjects who may be said to be fulfilling themselves most of the time. In theory at least we may also search any life history for episodes of self-actualization..." Maslow, Toward A Psychology of Being, p. 97.

13. Maslow, Toward A Psychology of Being, chapter 6, especially pp. 74-96.

14. It should be noted that Maslow also acknowledged the growth potential of "nadir" or "desolation" experiences, but chose to direct his attention to the peak experiences. See Maslow's preface to Religions, Values, and Peak Experiences. Later in his career Maslow began to give increasing recognition to what he termed "plateau experiences," which are less climactic and possibly more volitional than the peak

experiences. For an interesting account of this later development, see "The Plateau Experience: A. H. Maslow and Others," Journal of Transpersonal Psychology 4 (1973), 107-120.

15. Richard L. Johannesen, "The Emerging Concept of Communication as Dialogue," Quarterly Journal of Speech, 57 (1971), 373-382.
16. Maslow, Religions, Values, and Peak Experiences, p. 29.
17. See Barbara Westbrook Eakins and R. Gene Eakins, Sex Differences in Human Communication (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1978); Nancy M. Henley, Body Politics: Power, Sex, and Nonverbal communication (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1977); Barrie Thorne and Nancy Henley (eds.) Language and Sex: Difference and Dominance (Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House, 1975); Eleanor E. Maccoby and Carl N. Jacklin, The Psychology of Sex Differences (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1974), especially chapter 6; Marianne La France and Clara Mayo, "A Review of Nonverbal Behaviors of Men and Women," Western Journal of Speech Communication, 43 (1979), 96-107; John E. Baird, Jr., "Sex Differences in Group Communication: A Review of Relevant Research," Quarterly Journal of Speech, 62 (1976), 179-192.
18. Paul C. Cozby, "Self-Disclosure: A Literature Review," Psychological Bulletin, 79 (1973), 73-91.
19. Paul D. Cherulnik, "Sex Differences in the Expression of Emotion in a Structured Social Encounter," Sex Roles, 5 (1979), 413-424.

20. Ralph V. Exline, "Visual Interaction: The Glances of Power and Preference," in James Cole (ed.), Nebraska Symposium on Motivation, 1971 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1971), 163-206.

21. Wade C. Mackey, "Parameters of the Smile as a Social Signal," Journal of Genetic Psychology, 129 (1976), 125-130.

22. Albert Mehrabian, "Verbal and Nonverbal Interactions of Strangers in a Waiting Station," Journal of Experimental Research in Personality, 5 (1971), 127-138.

23. Stanley Heshka and Yona Nelson, "Interpersonal Speaking Distance as a Function of Age, Sex, and Relationship," Sociometry, 35 (1972), 491-498.

24. Ann Frodi, Jacqueline Macaulay, Pauline Ropert Thome, "Are Women Always Less Aggressive Than Men? A Review of the Experimental Literature," Psychological Bulletin, 84 (1977), 634-660.

25. Margaret L. McLaughlin, Michael J. Cody, Marjorie L. Kane, and Carl S. Robey, "Sex Differences in Story Receipt and Story Sequencing Behaviors in Dyadic Conversations," Human Communication Research, 7 (1981), 99-116.

26. Don H. Zimmerman and Candace West, "Sex Roles, Interruptions and Silences in Conversation," in B. Thorne and N. Henley (eds.) Language and Sex (Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House, 1975), 105-129.

27. Martin L. Hoffman, "Sex Differences in Empathy and Related Behaviors," Psychological Bulletin, 84 (1977), 712-722.

28. Mary Anne Fitzpatrick and Julie Indvik, "The Instrumental and Expressive Domains of Marital Communication," Human Communication Research, 8 (1982), 195-213.

29. Myra W. Isenhart, "An Investigation of the Relationship of Sex and Sex Role to the Ability to Decode Nonverbal Cues," Human Communication Research, 6 (1980), 309-318; Ross Buck, Robert E. Miller, and William Caul, "Sex, Personality, and Physiological Variables in the Communication of Affect via Facial Expression," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 30 (1974), 587-96.

30. Zick Rubin, "Measurement of Romantic Love," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 16 (1970), 265-273.

31. William Ickes and Richard D. Barnes, "The Role of Sex and Self-Monitoring in Unstructured Dyadic Interactions," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 35 (1977), 315-330.

32. John E. Baird, Jr., and Patricia H. Bradley, "Styles of Management and Communication: A Comparative Study of Men and Women," Communication Monographs, 46 (1979), 101-111.

33. Martin Hoffman, op. cit.

34. Kenneth Ravizza, "Peak Experiences in Sport," Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 17 (1977), 35-40.

35. Ravizza, p. 39-40.

36. Robert Panzarella, "The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Peak Experiences," Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 20 (1980), 69-85.

37. Marghanita Laski, Ecstasy (London: Cresset Press, Ltd., 1961).

38. In four of these surveys the principal question put to respondents was "Have you ever had the feeling of being close to a powerful spiritual force that seemed to lift you outside of yourself?" Approximately one-third of the respondents in each case answered affirmatively, while in a college sample this proportion was doubled. See Andrew Greeley, Ecstasy: A Way of Knowing (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1974); David Hay and Ann Morisy, "Reports of Ecstatic, Paranormal, or Religious Experience in Great Britain and the United States: A Comparison of Trends," Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 17 (1978), 255-268; L. Eugene Thomas and Pamela E. Cooper, "Measurement and Incidence of Mystical Experiences: An Exploratory Study," Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 17 (1978), 433-43; Carolyn S. Keutzer, "Whatever Turns You On: Triggers to Transcendent Experiences," Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 18 (1978), 77-80. Also see Robert Wuthnow, "Peak Experiences: Some Empirical Tests," Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 18 (1978), 59-75, and Johan Unger, On Religious Experience: A Psychological Study (Stockholm: Almquist and Wiksell, 1976). Classical treatments of peak religious experiences include Richard Bucke, Cosmic Consciousness (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1923); William James, Varieties of Religious Experience (New York: Modern Library, 1902), lectures XV & XVI; Walter T. Stace, Mysticism and Philosophy (Philadelphia: Leppincott, 1960); Evelyn Underhill, Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness (New York: World Publishing, 1955), and M. Laski's Ecstasy, as cited above.

39. Michael L. Hecht, "The Conceptualization and Measurement of Interpersonal Communication Satisfaction," Human Communication Research, 4 (1978), 253-264. Also see Hecht, "Measures of Communication Satisfaction," Human Communication Research, 4 (1978), 350-368.

40. Items from Hecht, 253-264.

41. Maslow, Toward a Psychology of Being, 74-96.

42. For a model of consciousness potentially useful for PCE research, see Charles T. Tart, States of Consciousness (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1975).

43. Carl R. Rogers, A Way of Being (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1980), chapter 1, "Experiences in Communication." Also see Charles B. Truax and Robert Carkhuff, Toward Effective Counseling and Psychotherapy (Chicago: Aldine, 1967).

44. Richard Johannesen, op. cit.

45. For example see Frank Wesley and Claire Wesley, Sex-Role Psychology (New York: Human Sciences Press, 1977), chapter 3; Hilary M. Lips and Nina L. Colwill, The Psychology of Sex Differences (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1978), Chapter 5; Katharine B. Hoyenga and Kermit T. Hoyenga, The Question of Sex Differences: Psychological, Cultural, and Biological Issues (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1979), Chapter 8.

46. David Bakan, The Duality of Human Existence (Chicago: Rand-McNally, 1966).

47. Aletha H. Stein and Margaret M. Bailey, "The Socialization of Achievement Orientation in Females," Psychological Bulletin, 80 (1973), 345-366.

48. Martin Hoffman, p. 720.

49. Zick Rubin, op. cit.

50. Mark L. Knapp, Donald G. Ellis, and Barbara A. Williams, "Perceptions of Communication Behavior Associated With Relationship Terms," Communication Monographs, 47 (1980), 262-278.

51. Inge K. Broverman, Susan R. Vogel, Donald M. Broverman, Frank E. Clarkson, Paul S. Rosenkrantz, "Sex-Role Stereotypes: A Current Appraisal," in Martha Mednick, Sandra Tangri, and Lois Hoffman, Women and Achievement (New York: Wiley and Sons, 1975), 32-47.

52. Eakins and Eakins, chapter 1.

53. Broverman, et al., op. cit.

54. Jesse G. Delia, Ruth Anne Clark and David E. Switzer, "The Content of Informal Conversations as a Function of Interactants' Interpersonal Cognitive Complexity," Communication Monographs, 46 (1979), 274-281.

55. Robert W. Norton, "Foundation of a Communicator Style Construct," Human Communication Research, 4 (1978), 99-112.

56. Roderick P. Hart, Robert E. Carlson and William F. Eadie, "Attitudes Toward Communication and the Assessment of Rhetorical Sensitivity," Communication Monographs, 47 (1980), 1-22.

57. It is likely that the PCE concept is also of use in communication contexts other than the interpersonal. There are certain public rhetorical events, for example, that perhaps cannot be adequately assessed by traditional measures of source credibility, attitude change, or critical analysis, but that would lend themselves to greater apprehension through a PCE framework. It also seems that a fuller knowledge of "consubstantiality" in rhetorical interaction would be aided by an understanding of peak communication experiences in rhetorical contexts.